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Predictors and Components in the Academic Motivation of Nursing Students during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Jordan

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Abstract

Background: Nursing is a noble profession that aims to care for individuals, families, and communities to achieve optimum health and quality of life. Nurses are the largest constituent of the healthcare team and nursing students' motivation towards their field of inquiry affects their satisfaction and academic performance.

Aim: To examine the academic motivation among nursing students in public universities in Jordan in the context of COVID-19.

Materials and Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study conducted in three public universities in Jordan. A total of 437 nursing students in their second, third, or fourth year of study answered a self-administered online questionnaire. Descriptive and multivariant analysis was conducted using SPSS 24.

Results: Academic motivation among students from three public universities was below the averages reported in the international literature. Students' mean scores on the academic motivation scale knowledge was 90.25 out of 196, and the average mean scores for all subscales were just above the midpoint, except for the extrinsic regulation scale, which was 14.57 out of 30. Students reported higher levels of extrinsic motivation.

Conclusions: Educators must focus on nursing students' need for support and consider the development of a curriculum that strengthens student learning and nurtures their internal and external motivation needs.

Keywords: Nursing students, academic motivation, academic performance, public universities, Jordan.

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Introduction

During the COVID-19 global pandemic, nursing schools around the world replaced traditional face-to-face nursing education with online learning methods using a range of platforms [1]. Likewise, Jordanian universities swiftly shifted to online teaching to train nursing students. Due to the COVID-19 restriction measures in the fall semester of the academic year 2020–2021, nursing students' clinical training was conducted online in all public universities in Jordan. Among the issues of concern that could have posed a challenge to most students in that period was academic motivation, influenced by the limited scope of

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clinical training and decision-making skills, and perceived self-efficacy; in turn, these could affect academic performance, coping strategies, and clinical skills [1]. Thus, it was necessary to examine the academic motivation among nursing students after the dramatic change in the learning and training process which lasted for more than three semesters.

Motivation is commonly defined as "The inner urge that moves or prompts a person to action", and motivation to learn is viewed as the ability to model, communicate, direct instructions, and socialize with others, such as parents, peers, and teachers [2–3]. Being a prerequisite, motivation rests at the heart of learning, which is the aim of education [4]. Academic motivation is the inner energy required to produce professional academic work. This is applicable to undergraduate nursing students since the higher the students' academic motivation is, the higher their academic performance will be [5].

Nursing is an honorable profession that provides care and sympathy with all human beings regardless. It is vital for nurses to be well-motivated to provide care and contribute effectively to the healthcare providers' team [4–6]. Nursing students' motivation towards their field of inquiry directs their study behaviors, and is an essential factor in improving performance and achievement [6]. The reasons for selecting the nursing profession include, but are not limited to, the desire to help or care for others, as well as performing valuable and helpful acts in life [3]. Nursing students' motivation towards their field of inquiry is the energy that kindles the processes of starting, sustaining, and directing their study behaviors. Nursing students are always driven by the longing to help other people and accomplish something valuable [7].

Thinking about others before yourself is viewed as a primary inspiration for nursing students who enroll in nursing training. Moreover, having self-motivation and other people's encouragement are also key elements in their decision [5]. Other possible determinants of the decision to study nursing are employment security and adaptability, as much as the desire to think about others [5, 7–9].

Nursing education in public universities in Jordan is similar to other fields of inquiry in that it consists of two complementary parts: theoretical training and practical training [10]. At the theoretical level, a student learns basic medical and caring sciences to be prepared for the clinical phase. In the practical phase, the learning process enhances student motivation and supports their choice of nursing as a vocation. Students interact with patients in a variety of clinical settings and acquire the necessary skills to attain a deeper knowledge and insights into the techniques and procedures they will apply later in their career.

Academic motivation is directly associated with the academic progress of the nursing student [11] but, due to the COVID-19 crisis, new and unforeseen barriers [4] arose to traditional clinical training which may have influenced the motivation of the nursing students in the public universities in Jordan. Since there is limited knowledge regarding the effects of online education on nursing students in Jordan during COVID-19, this study aimed to examine the determinants of academic motivation among these students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design and Settings

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted between May–December, 2020. The data were collected from three universities

in Jordan using online methods to ensure the safety of the students during the second lockdown and restriction measures implemented because of the pandemic.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was issued by the Research Ethics Committee of the College of Nursing at Mutah University in April, 2020. Afterwards, official letters were sent by the president of Mutah University to the presidents of all the public universities in Jordan requesting their permission to participate in the study. The students received information about the study purpose and process. Those who voluntarily agreed to participate in this study signed a written consent form. The participants had full autonomy to leave the study at any time without a reason. Data confidentiality was ensured, and the identities of the participants were not disclosed.

Data Collection Instruments

Considering the scarcity of evaluations of the nursing students' academic motivation in Jordan, the authors translated into Arabic the 1992 academic motivation scale (AMS) [12] and used it in this study. Vallerand et al. [12] investigated the reliability of AMS using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the result ranged between 0.83 and 0.86. They also tested and confirmed the convergent validity of the scale by examining the relationship between the scale's dimensions and other measures of motivation. The data gathered using the AMS were divided into seven different dimensions that exist within an autonomous continuum in correlation with each other. These are: 1) intrinsic motivation to know, which means that the student does the academic activity for the satisfaction that they feel when they acquire new knowledge; 2) intrinsic motivation to accomplish, which means that the student engages in the learning environment to feel competent; 3) intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation, which means the student participates in the assignment to feel inspired; 4) extrinsic motivation for external regulation, which means that the students performs the activity to get external support; 5) extrinsic motivation for introjected regulation, which means that the student starts to personalize their activities; 6) extrinsic motivation for identified regulation, which means the behavior is appreciated and significant for the student; and, 7) amotivation, which means that the student has neither intrinsic nor extrinsic motivation. The subscales consisted of four items each, adding up to a total of 28 items.

Study Participants

The participants in this study were students enrolled in a four year (eight-semester) nursing bachelor's degree program in public universities in Jordan, and this was the sole inclusion criterion. We excluded first-year nursing students unless they had a high cumulative grade point average (GPA) and had had minimal clinical interaction during the clinical practice phase of the first-year course.

The data collection process was completed through an online self-report questionnaire. The participants' course grades were obtained from authorized personnel and suitably recorded.

Statistical Analysis

Due to the nature of the study, SPSS 21.0 (Inc., Chicago, Illinois, USA) was used for data analysis. For the descriptive statistics, mean ± standard deviation, median, minimum, and maximum values were measured. The correlations between AMS mean scores and sample characteristics were also measured

using Pearson and point Bi-serial coefficients.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

The study sample consisted of 437 students majoring in nursing from three nursing universities in Jordan. The number of female participants (n=340, 77.4%) was significantly higher compared to males (n=97, 22.1%). The students' age was 22–50 and approximately half of the students were single (n=215, 49%). The participants were distributed over four academic years. Most students were in their third year of study (n=200, 45.6%). Students' grade point averages (GPA) were clustered between good and very good as just under half (n=191, 43.5%) were regular students and the vast majority (n=385, 87.7%) were unemployed. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the study sample. Unfortunately, there were missing data, revealing a limitation in reporting these findings, but they did not exceed 5% on all occasions.

Table 1: Characteristics of the study sample*

Factor	n	Category	N	%
Sex	437	Female	340	77.4
		Male	97	22.1
Age (years)	429	Range 22-50		11.34
Marital status		Single	215	49.0
		Married	13	2.9
Academic Year	429	First	78	17.8
		Second	102	23.2
		Third	200	45.6
		Fourth	49	11.2
GPA	344	Fair	23	5.2
		Good	164	37.4
		Very good	118	26.9
		Excellent	39	8.9
Type of enrolment		Regular	191	43.5
		Parallel	54	12.3
		International	1	.2
		Bridging	2	.5
Employment		Yes	18	4.1
		No	385	87.7

*Differences in numbers are due to missing data

Findings of the students on the AMS and its subscales

The data were tested for normality and were within standards of normal distribution. Therefore, parametric tests were adopted in the analysis of the study results. Table 2 shows that students' mean scores on the AMS scale knowledge were 90.25 out of 196 and the average mean scores for all the subscales were just above the midpoint except for the extrinsic

regulation scale, which was 14.57 out of 30. The highest mean score was for identified extrinsic motivation (M=14.59 out of 20) followed by accomplishment (M=13.04 out of 20), while the lowest was for the extrinsic regulation scale. The total mean score for intrinsic motivation was lower than for extrinsic motivation, with a greater midpoint of 38.00 and 39.00, respectively. Moreover, the midpoint scores (50% or second quartile) showed that the AMS, along with the entire subscales, fell below the theoretical midpoint of 98 for the AMS and 28 for the subscales.

Table 2: Findings of students' responses on the AMS and its subscales

Scale	Subscale	n*	Range	Mean	SD	Midpoint	Skewness (SE)	Kurtosis (SE)	α
AMS		371	28-142	90.25	19.23	93.00	-.586- (.127)	.621 (.253)	.914
Intrinsic motivation			12-58	37.41	8.38	38.00	-.424 (.121)	.353 (.241)	
	Knowledge	429	4-20	12.72	3.55	13.00	-.272- (.118)	-.276- (.235)	
	Accomplishment	423	4-20	13.04	3.27	13.00	-.558- (.119)	.407 (.237)	
	Stimulation	428	4-20	11.65	3.20	12.00	-.224- (.118)	-.203- (.235)	
Extrinsic motivation			12-66	38.33	8.87	39.00	.305 (.122)	.460 (.243)	
	Identified	425	4-20	14.59	4.15	15.00	-.700- (.118)	-.207- (.236)	
	Introjected	427	4-20	11.70	2.97	12.00	.154 (.118)	.575 (.236)	
	Extrinsic regulation	421	4-30	14.57	15.00	3.96	-.473- (.118)	.179 (.237)	
Amotivation		421	4-20	12.09	12.00	3.57	-.027- (.119)	-.044- (.237)	

*Variations in numbers are due to missing data

The correlation and the impact of sample characteristics on AMS mean scores

The correlations between AMS mean score and sample characteristics were measured using Pearson and point Bi-serial coefficients. As demonstrated in Table 3, the AMS was significantly correlated with sex (r=.180, p=.001) and marital status (r=.221, p=.002), but not with the remaining sample characteristics.

Table 3: Correlation between academic motivation and sample characteristics

Characteristic	AMS	
	r	***P***
Sex	.180	.001
Academic year	.080	.129
GPA	.056	.339
Type of enrolment	.017	.802
Marital status	.221	.002
Employment	.000	.993

As previously indicated, the sex of the students and their marital status had a statistically significant correlation with the AMS mean score. As seen in Table 4, the female students scored significantly higher mean scores than the males, indicating that academic motivation was lower among the male students. Moreover, married students scored significantly higher mean scores than the single participants. However, the difference between the number of married (n=10) and single students (n=186) was very high. Therefore, no conclusion can be made by comparing categories.

Table 4: Mean differences in academic motivation within sex and marital status

	Category	N	Mean	SD	*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Sex * AMS[¥]	Female	287	92.47	18.00	3.85	367	.000	9.11	2.37
	Male	82	83.37	21.75	3.47	114.55	.001	9.11	2.63
Marital status*AMS	Single	186	87.89	20.56	-3.15-	194	.002	-20.71-	6.58
	Married	10	108.60	12.55	-4.88-	11.78	.000	-20.71-	4.24

[¥]AMS: Academic Motivation Scale

Predictors of academic motivation among university students

Academic motivation is reported in the literature as being associated with several factors. In this study, sex, academic GPA, and academic year were studied. The factors incorporated into this hierarchical multiple regression included AMS mean scores as the dependent values, with model one including sex, model two including sex and academic average, and model three including sex, academic average, and academic year. Then, the models were modified to include only sex, because it was the main contributor, while GPA and academic year were not significantly correlated with the AMS (Table 4). Marital status was excluded due to the difference in the numbers of single vs. married students.

Sex was a significant predictor of academic motivation scores (b=-8.917, t (398)= -3.440, p<.001). Sex also explained a proportion of the variance in academic motivation scores (R^2=.039, F(1, 389)=11.836, p=.001). Accordingly, the results show that R^2 increased

from 3.9–4.2% (Model 1 to Model 2) and .045 in model three. The first model had one predictor, the second model had two predictors, and the third had three. Although the other predictors were all significant, the change in R^2 was minimal in models 2–3, indicating that GPA and academic year were weak predictors of motivation compared to sex (R=.198, R^2= 0.039). In another instance, linear regression testing was run for AMS, IM, and EM as independent variables, with the GPA (dependent variable) as an indicator of academic achievement. However, no significant association was found between each of these variables and the GPA. To sum up, sex was only found to predict a very small percentage of the variance, while other personal characteristics were not significant predictors.

Table 5: Predictors of academic motivation

Model									
		B	**Std. Error**	***t***	**R**	**R^2**	**Adjusted R^2**	**F**	**Sig.**
1*	Constant	101.107	3.398	29.759					
	Sex	-8.917-	2.592	-3.440-	.198	.039	.036	11.836	.001
2*	Constant	97.691	5.054	19.330					
	Sex	-8.842-	2.594	-3.409-	.205	.042	.035	6.331	.002
	GPA	1.325	1.451	.913					
3*	Constant	95.418	5.721	16.679	.211	.045	.035	4.457	.004
	Sex	-8.782-	2.596	-3.383-					
	Academic average	1.220	1.456	.838					
	Academic year	1.045	1.231	.849					

*Independent variables: Model 1: Sex. Model 2: Sex, GPA. Model 3: Sex, GPA, Academic year. Dependent variable: Academic motivation (All models).

Discussion

This study has investigated the level of academic motivation measured by AMS among university students majoring in nursing. It also examined the relationships between student characteristics and academic motivation, including sex, academic year, and GPA, which pointed out predictors as shown in the results. The results revealed that academic motivation among students in Jordanian universities is below reported levels in many international literature [5, 13]. These results include the AMS and its seven subscales, constituting three domains (i.e., intrinsic, extrinsic motivation, and motivation). Students in the present study reported higher levels of extrinsic motivation compared to the levels of intrinsic motivation (extrinsic motivation arises from outside of the individual while intrinsic motivation comes from within). This result indicates that students rely heavily on external sources to ensure self-reinforcement with academic motivation [5] , which, however, is based on the availability of external supportive systems and well-established social milieu. This result could have been influenced by the lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, which forced students to train using online education instead of having face-to-face interaction.

Academic motivation, sex, and marital status correlated with academic motivation.

However, the result of the correlation for marital status was excluded as a significant finding due to the difference in numbers of single and married students. Although female students reported higher levels of academic motivation than the males on the AMS, sex was a weak predictor of academic motivation (R^2=.039, p=.001). The GPA and academic year of the students were not significant predictors of academic motivation. Aside from these findings, Khalaila [14] studied the academic motivation of undergraduate nursing students and reported students perceiving themselves as academically competent with higher GPAs. The literature has reported a positive correlation between academic motivation and academic success, as reflected by the GPA [13, 15–16]. However, no similar finding was found in the present study. Although many studies show that intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivation are potential predictors of academic and achievement as reflected by the GPA [14, 16–19], they differed in this study.

As previously shown, students in this study were extrinsically motivated. Radi [2] reported that extrinsically motivated nursing students achieved lower academic performance and GPAs. Prospero and Vohra-Gupta [20] argued that students whose motivations are more intrinsic improve their academic performance, earn higher grades, and achieve better GPAs. Comparable conclusions are reported by other studies [17, 21,–22]. As for this study, it is difficult to make similar assumptions; however, the GPA was not significantly associated with academic achievement, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Bacon and Bean [23] contend that GPA often correlates with variables of interest in educational research, providing the potential to increase the statistical power of research studies. Therefore, this study considers it as a key factor influenced by, or influencing, academic motivation. Data reflected that it is not GPA but other factors, such as sex, that have a significant effect on academic motivation.

A study by Sankoc and Oksuz [5] showed that extrinsic motivation levels of third-year students were lower than those of other students, and sophomores had lower levels of intrinsic motivation than their senior counterparts. As sophomores interact with the faculty and other colleagues, they develop more extrinsic motivation to challenge the new environment and provide evidence of their qualifications. This evidence can be in the form of earning high marks and increasing GPA. As students move to more advanced classes and their experiences accumulate further, the effect of the external factors on their motivation lessens. By examining the distribution of the mean scores based on the academic year and referring to the theoretical midpoint for each dimension (i.e., intrinsic and extrinsic motivations), it can be noticed that the more the academic year advances, the higher the internal motivation is for senior students and the lower it is for sophomores.

In the same vein, Rugutt and Chemosit [24] examined the university students' motivation, revealing that it is related to student-faculty interaction, student-to-student relations, and critical thinking skills. They also show that there is a relationship between faculty support and motivation, clarifying findings in the present study regarding internal motivation and external motivation among students from different academic years [24]. Similar findings were reported by Sturges et al. [22] which showed that sophomore students taking human anatomy and physiology courses were more

extrinsically motivated to succeed. They also revealed that the students main reason for success was a preference for rewards and avoidance of punishment and guilt [22]. Understanding that students may be extrinsically motivated, educators must focus on students' need for support and consider re-designing courses provided during the first year to strengthen their learning and motivation. In another study, Maurer et al. [13] explored the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of undergraduate students enrolled in three different courses (human anatomy and physiology, physics, and nutrition). They showed that sophomore students achieved higher mean scores on the external motivation subscales, while more advanced students achieved higher mean scores on the internal motivation subscales. Similar findings were also reported by Van Etten et al. in 2008 [25].

Conclusion

In short, our findings show that the average academic motivation among students in Jordanian universities is below that reported in many international studies in the literature. Although female students had higher levels of academic motivation than the males for the AMS, sex was a weak predictor of academic motivation. The GPA and academic year of the students were not significant predictors of academic motivation. The total mean score for intrinsic motivation was lower than for extrinsic motivation, with a greater midpoint.

This study measured the academic motivation of the nursing students during the restrictive measures of COVID-19 in Jordan, in recognition of this being a gap in the literature. However, this research has limitations that included missing data as the questionnaire was self-administered by the participants. Nevertheless, the percentage of missing data was under 5% and this did not affect the data quality.

Recommendations

In light of the discussion and the results of the study, promoting and strengthening student self-motivation should be implemented in the curriculum, along the following lines: connecting academic requirements to real-world situations; creating rewarding opportunities for social interaction; tying student academic performance and classroom participation to specific rewards and/or privileges; helping students set achievable goals for themselves; and, incorporating instructional behaviors that motivate students through well-structured courses with various teaching and training methods so that the students become more qualified nurses.

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مؤشرات وعناصر التحفيز الأكاديمي لطلبة التمريض خلال جائحة(كوفيد-19) في الأردن

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الملخص

التمريض مهنة نبيلة تهدف إلى رعاية الأفراد والأسر والمجتمعات لتحقيق الصحة ونوعية الحياة المثلى، والممرضون والممرضات هم الأغلبية العظمى في فريق الرعاية الصحية؛ لذلك يؤثر تحفيز طلبة التمريض الدراسي على رضاهم وأدائهم الأكاديمي.

هدفت هذه الدراسة الوصفية المقطعية إلى قياس التحفيز الأكاديمي لدى طلبة كليات التمريض خلال جائحة **(كوفيد-19)** في الجامعات الحكومية الأردنية؛ حيث إنها أجريت في ثلاث جامعات حكومية على(437) طالبًا وطالبة تمريض في السنة الثانية والثالثة والرابعة من خلال استبيان تم توزيعه عبر الإنترنت، وبعد ذلك تم إجراء تحليل وصفي، وتحليل متعدد المتغيرات باستخدام برنامج الحزمة الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية(SPSS)، ودلت النتائج على أن التحفيز الأكاديمي بين الطلبة أقل من معدل التحفيز الذي وجدته الدراسات العلمية المنشورة سابقًا؛ حيث كان متوسط درجات الطلبة في مقياس التحفيز الأكاديمي(90.25) من أصل(196)، وكان متوسط الدرجات لجميع المقاييس الفرعية أعلى بقليل من نقطة المنتصف باستثناء مقياس التنظيم الخارجي، والذي كان(14.57) من أصل(30)، وأشار الطلبة إلى أن مستويات التحفيز الخارجي كانت مرتفعة.

النتيجة: يجب أن يركز المدرسون في الجامعات على حاجة طلبة كليات التمريض للدعم والنظر في تطوير منهج يعزز تعلمهم، ويغذي احتياجاتهم الداخلية والخارجية من التحفيز الأكاديمي

الكلمات الدالة: طلبة التمريض، التحفيز الأكاديمي، الأداء الأكاديمي، الجامعات الحكومية، الأردن.